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THE DYSPEPTIC OGRE  
A MODERNIZED FAIRY PLAY

*Opus 57*







**THE DYSPEPTIC OGRE**  
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*Opus 57*

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## CHARACTERS

THE OGRE  
THE OGRE'S COOK  
FRANCES  
THE MONDAY DINNER  
THE TUESDAY DINNER  
THE WEDNESDAY DINNER  
THE THURSDAY DINNER  
THE FRIDAY DINNER  
THE SATURDAY DINNER  
THE SUNDAY DINNER  
THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT  
THE OTHER BOY SCOUTS  
and  
THE JESTER

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112.1

## THE DYSPEPTIC OGRE

*Before the curtains part a Jester, with cap and bells and stick, enters at one side, comes to the cent of the stage, and bows deeply to the audience.*

### THE JESTER

Ladies and gentlemen: This is a fairy play; a fairy play all about an Ogre who lived in a Castle in the Calabrian Mountains (wherever they may be) in the Steenth Century. The Steenth Century, by the way, began ever so many years ago, and by a most remarkable coincidence, ended exactly one hundred years later. Of course the Ogre is dead now; he died of acute indigestion one day after eating a particularly hearty lunch; but he was very much alive then! Indeed he was!

Now an Ogre is a person who dines ex-clu-sive-ly on human flesh (which is a very bad habit); but this Ogre is not like other Ogres: not at all. Indeed, he might be called an Ogre because nothing but human flesh O-grees with him.

*[The curtains part an inch or two, and a little girl taps the Jester on the back.]*

### THE JESTER *(to the audience)*

Excuse me a minute. *(He converses with the little girl in earnest dumb show. She disappears, and he turns to the audience)* She says I mustn't tell you

too much about our play, because if I did I might spoil it all. But I must say this: (*with great precaution that the actors behind the curtains shall not overhear him, he whispers to the audience*) don't be afraid that the Ogre's going to eat *her!* By no means! Of course, I know that it looks as if that were going to happen. But don't let it upset you. (*Very confidentially*) Appearances are deceptive. [*The curtains part once more, and the little girl demonstrates with the Jester again.*]

#### THE JESTER

She says I mustn't say another word. They're all ready to begin. (*He goes solemnly to the side of the stage, bows to the audience, and raps three times. The curtains part, disclosing a large room with a door at the back, and a large, heavily barred door at the side. Seats himself comfortably*) This is the larder in the Ogre's Castle. It is a very unpleasant Castle, with a Moat and a Drawbridge and a Portcullis and Sentries, and no hot and cold running water and very old-fashioned plumbing. But then the Ogre doesn't bathe very often, and if he did, he would find the Moat much roomier than any bathtub (though not nearly so private); but the plumbing has nothing to do with this play, so it doesn't really matter.

This is the Ogre's larder — (*in answer to an imaginary question from the audience he spells out the word*) l-a-r-d-e-r — and this is inside the Ogre's Castle, and all that we can see of the outside is a wee patch of sky through the narrow, barred windows high up in the thick stone walls.



You wonder where that big door leads. Well (*and he whispers to the audience again*) in those good old days they didn't have ice-boxes, and the Ogre had to keep his dinner alive until he was ready to eat it; and there is a whole collection of dinners behind that door waiting for the Ogre to get up an appetite. (*A telephone rings on a kitchen table*)

Of course, some people will say there were no telephones in the Steenth Century, when all of this happens; but I read a book which was written then, and it doesn't say that they didn't have telephones, and if the man who wrote that book didn't know, I'd like to know who does!

[*The Ogre's cook, who is fat, and sleepy, and who has been dozing at the big table, wakes up and goes to the telephone.*

This is the Ogre's Cook. You will learn to know her much better later on.

THE COOK (*who, by the way, is a lady-cook*)

Hello! Hello! (*She jiggles the lever up and down*)  
What? . . . Ye rang me, Cintral. (*She hangs up the telephone in disgust*) "Excuse it, please!"

[*The Ogre enters. He is a little bent gentleman, with thick spectacles, who hobbles around with the aid of a cane.*

THE JESTER

This is the Ogre. (*The Ogre, proceeding into the room, stops to bow to the Jester, who returns his bow*)  
He is a very polite Ogre.

THE OGRE (*bows to the Jester again, and goes to the Cook*)

Where are my pills?

THE COOK (*producing a bottle containing enormous red and green pills*)

There they are, sorr. (*The Ogre empties out two or three*) Wait a minute; I'll be afther gettin' ye a sup of wather! (*She brings him water*) There!

THE OGRE (*swallowing — or appearing to swallow — several pills*) My stomach feels so bad — so bad this morning!

THE JESTER (*to the audience*)

So would yours if you ate what he eats!

THE OGRE (*to the Cook*)

I thought I heard the telephone ring.

THE COOK

Yez did, sorr.

THE JESTER

I forgot to say that the Cook is Irish. They had Irish cooks in the Steenth Century, just as they will have Irish cooks in the Steenty-Steenth.

THE OGRE (*to the Cook*)

Well, what did they want?

THE COOK

'Twas a wrong number, sorr. Bad 'cess on 'em!

THE JESTER (*with a wealth of expression*)

“Bad 'cess” is something like measles — only more unpleasant.

[*The telephone rings again. The Ogre takes it up.*]

THE OGRE

Hello! Yes . . . Yes . . . (*Angrily*) YES! (*With a sudden change of manner, very cordially*) Oh, it's the butcher!

THE COOK

The butcher!

THE OGRE

Do we need any meat?

THE COOK (*counting on her fingers*)

I'm afraid we do, sorr.

THE JESTER

What a whopper! Just wait and see what they've got behind that door!

THE OGRE (*to the telephone*)

Yes; we need some meat. What have you got that's nice this morning? . . . (*To the Cook*) He says he's got a nice fresh politician. Ugh!

THE COOK (*earnestly*)

Politicians? Don't be afther thryin' thim again, sorr. Th' last wan was so tough 'twas all I could do to make broth out of him!

THE OGRE

And I couldn't keep even that on my stomach! (*He turns to the telephone*) No; no politicians this morning. What else have you got? . . . (*With great pleasure*) He's got a poet!

[*The Jester breaks into uproarious laughter and applause, rocking back and forth overcome with mirth at something humorous which the audience has apparently overlooked. The Ogre and the Cook stop the action of the play to bow appreciatively to the Jester, who continues to laugh. When he finally quiets down, the play proceeds again.*]

THE COOK

What does he say he has?

THE OGRES

He say he's got a poet!

THE COOK (*reproachfully*)

Now! Now!

THE OGRE

I love poetry! And I love poets! Particularly fried with drawn butter and parsley!

THE COOK

Do yez want to kill yourself entoirely? Ye had a nightmare after ye et the last. Did ye or did ye not? Well?

THE OGRE (*sadly and reluctantly*)

I did.

THE JESTER

He would have had a Welsh rabbit dream if Welsh rabbits had been invented, but this is the Steenth Century, and nobody has discovered them yet.

THE COOK (*with finality*)

No more poets, if ye know what's best for ye!

THE OGRE (*to the telephone, sorrowfully*)

No; no poets to-day . . . (*He turns to the Cook again*) He says he's got some nice little girls.

THE COOK

How much?

THE OGRE

How much? . . . Forty-eight cents a pound? My, my, you're dear!

THE COOK

'Tis the only thing ye can digest.

THE OGRE

He says they'll do for broiling.

THE COOK

Take 'em.

THE OGRE

I'd prefer something else for a change.

THE COOK

An' upset your stomach again? Take 'em, or it'll be th' worse for ye!

THE OGRE (*to the telephone*)

Can you pick out one? Just one? . . . Nice? . . . Fat? . . . Juicy? . . . (*He turns to the Cook*) I think I ought to go to the market and pick her out myself.

THE COOK

Let me talk to him! (*She takes up the telephone*)  
Listen, me bould shpalpeen!

THE JESTER

"Shpalpeen" is an Irish word, and I don't know exactly what it means.

THE COOK

Send her up; yis, send her up! An' if she isn't better than th' last, 'tis meself will make yez eat her! Yis! Ye'll have to eat her, even if she sticks in your craw! So there! (*She hangs up the receiver, and turns to the Ogre*) When I've finished cookin' her; when I've got her stuffed with sage and chestnuts, an' roasted to a turn, with a sweet sauce with almonds and rice, my, won't she make your mouth wather!

THE OGRE (*disconsolately*)

I suppose so; I suppose so.

THE COOK

Ye talk as if ye didn't like th' idea.

THE OGRE

I don't. I don't like to eat children. I'd prefer mutton; or beef.

THE COOK

Ye can't digest thim; an' if ye could, ye wouldn't be an ogre.

THE OGRE

I don't want to be an ogre.

THE COOK (*with finality*)

Ye've got to be an ogre!

THE JESTER (*turning to the audience apprehensively*)

He's got to be an ogre, or there won't be any play!

THE COOK (*proceeding to the barred door*)

Look what's waitin' for ye! Your Monday dinner!

[*She opens the door, and a little girl enters.*]

THE OGRE (*peering around*)

Where is it? Where is it?

THE COOK

Right before your eyes!

THE JESTER

He's so blind he can hardly see her.

THE OGRE (*finally discerning the little girl, and rising politely*)

How do you do, dinner?

THE MONDAY DINNER (*frightened, but curtsying*)

Very well, thank you, sir.

THE COOK (*introducing other little girls as they enter*)

Your Tuesday dinner. Your Wednesday dinner.

Your Thursday dinner. Your Friday dinner. Your

Saturday dinner. Your Sunday dinner.

THE OGRE

How do you do, food?

THE DINNERS

Very well, thank you, sir.

THE OGRE

Are you getting enough to eat?

THE MONDAY DINNER

Oh, yes, sir! Plenty, sir.

THE OGRE (*turning to the Cook*)

Didn't one of them have a cold?

THE COOK (*indicating the Wednesday dinner*)

'Twas this wan.

THE OGRE (*hobbling closer*)

How do you feel, my dear? Is your cold better?

THE WEDNESDAY DINNER

Buch bedder! Thagk you, sir.

THE OGRE (*tragically*)

"Buch bedder! Thagk you, sir!" She wants to poison me!

THE COOK

Wednesday dinner, change place with Sunday dinner! There! (*The two girls indicated change places*) Give yourself th' benefit of th' doubt! Never take a chanst, says I!

THE OGRE (*cheering up a little as he surveys his collection*)

I don't see why we want more meat when we have all of this.

THE COOK

Ye don't want to eat thim till they're fattened up, do ye?

THE OGRE

No; I suppose not.

THE COOK

Give 'em toime, says I; give 'em toime!

THE OGRE (*going to the Monday dinner*)

Let me feel your muscle, my dear. (*The little girl*)

*doubles her arm. The Ogre feels her muscle. With great pleasure*) Is that the best you can do?

THE MONDAY DINNER

Yes, sir.

THE OGRE

Try hard. Now!

THE MONDAY DINNER

I'm trying my hardest.

THE OGRE

And that's your very best?

THE MONDAY DINNER

Yes, sir.

THE OGRE (*excitedly*)

Sweet child!

[*He attempts to take a bite out of her biceps.*

THE COOK (*stopping him energetically*)

Not raw! Not raw!

THE OGRE (*reluctantly*)

I suppose not. But isn't she just too sweet!

THE COOK

She'll be much swater fricasseed with Maryland sauce.

[*The Jester, as before, breaks into hilarious laughter. All the performers are pleased, and bow to him.*

THE JESTER

Maryland sauce! In the Steenth Century! Maryland sauce!

[*The actors show that they are offended; the Jester subsides suddenly; the play continues.*

THE OGRE (*proceeding to the Thursday dinner*)

And you, my dear; let me feel your muscle. (*He feels; then to the Cook*)

She's not very tender.



THE COOK

She's only been here a week, sorr.

THE OGRE

Put her to bed; no exercise; double rations; lots of candy and cream.

THE COOK

Yis, sorr.

THE OGRE

Even then we may have to use her for soup stock. (*He shakes his finger at her*) I'm disappointed in you, little girl! Disappointed! (*He looks around piteously*) I'm an old man, and I haven't a good digestion, and what you would do to me! Oh, what you would do to me! (*He collapses into a chair*) Get me my pills. (*The Cook brings them. He swallows one. Points to the Thursday dinner*) Take her away! Take them all away! The thought of them is enough to ruin my appetite!

THE COOK (*to the dinners*)

Come on, there's a dear. Come on. Come on. [*She urges them back where they came from.*]

THE OGRE

Get them out of my sight! Away with them! (*Feebly*) This business of being an ogre isn't what it's cracked up to be!

THE JESTER (*shaking his head sympathetically*)

Of course, he didn't use those words in the Steenth Century; but that's exactly how he felt. (*Addressing the Ogre*) Isn't that true?

[*The Ogre nods sadly.*]

THE COOK (*having fastened the great door, returns to the Ogre, and begins temptingly*)

With a bit of allspice, and a dash of lemon, and a little mushroom flavoring . . .

THE OGRE (*interrupting*)

Ugh!

THE COOK

An' a thick yellow sauce, an' a touch of curry . . .

THE OGRE

Ugh! Ugh!

THE COOK

An' I'll bake some of 'em into a pie, browned on th' top, an' crisp at th' edges . . .

THE OGRE

Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!

THE JESTER

He's thinking of the pies his mother used to make.  
[*A trumpet call outside.*]

*Maestoso f*

The but - cher man! The but - cher man!

THE COOK

The butcher!

THE OGRE (*brightening a little*)

The new girl!

THE COOK

I'll bring her right in!

[*The trumpet sounds a second time.*]

*Presto ff*

Hur - ry up! Hur-ry up! Hur-ry up! Hur-ry up!

## THE COOK

Take yer toime! Take yer toime! I'm coming!  
 [*She goes out.*]

## THE JESTER

That was the way the butcher announced he was calling in the Steenth Century. In those good old days there was style to keeping house.

[*The trumpet blows a third time; a long and complicated call.*]

*Recitativo*

I've put her on the dumb-wait-er! I've

put her on the dumb-wait-er! I've put her on the

dumb-wait - er! Now hoi - - - st!

THE JESTER (*after having listened attentively*)

In the language of the Steenth Century, that means,  
 "I've put her on the dumb-waiter. Hoist."

(*The Ogre, who has been sitting at the table disconsolately, rises laboriously, produces a pocket mirror and a comb, and proceeds to spruce himself up. The Jester, sighing*)

The good old days! Ah, the good old days! To-day

what housewife would powder her nose to receive a lamb chop?

*[The door at the rear flies open, the Ogre faces about ceremoniously, and the little girl who interrupted the Jester before the curtains parted stands on the threshold.]*

THE OGRE

Hello!

FRANCES

Hello!

THE OGRE (*bowing rheumatically*)

Allow me to welcome you to my castle.

FRANCES (*curtsying*)

Thank you.

THE OGRE

Won't you walk in?

FRANCES

Yes. (*She looks around*) What a queer room this is! Oh, but it's not polite to criticize.

THE OGRE

It is anything but polite. I think it is a very nice room.

FRANCES

Do you? Well, then, I agree with you.

THE OGRE (*unable to believe his ears*)

What did you say? What did you say?

FRANCES

I said, "I agree with you."

THE OGRE (*joyfully*)

You agree with me! What beautiful words! You agree with me! How I hope you mean it!

FRANCES

Of course I mean it.

THE OGRE (*dubiously*)

I'll know more about that a little later.

THE JESTER

He means he'll have inside information.

THE OGRE (*shaking his head sadly*)

It's happened to me so often before : so often! I've met little girls — oh, the dearest children — and they said they'd agree with me, and I thought they meant it. But they didn't. (*He rubs his stomach pathetically*) They disagreed with me most violently. Deceitful little wretches!

FRANCES

I hope you won't find me deceitful.

THE OGRE

I hope I won't, my dear. When I think of what I did for some of those children it almost destroys my faith in human nature! I treated them like royalty; I fed them on the fat of the land; I thought nothing was too good for them! And how did they repay me? They kept me awake nights!  
[*He hobbles to the table and takes a pill.*]

FRANCES (*timidly*)

I don't know if I ought to talk to you.

THE OGRE

And why not, pray?

FRANCES

We haven't been introduced.

THE OGRE (*smiling*)

Well, that can be arranged. What is your name?

FRANCES

My name is Frances.

THE OGRE

Pleased to meet you. Now, is everything all right?

FRANCES

What is your name?

THE OGRE (*sighing*)

It's so long since anybody has called me by my name that I've almost forgotten it. I'm just the Ogre.

But when I was a little fellow, just a shaver —

THE JESTER (*interrupting*)

An Ogrette, so to speak.

THE OGRE

My mother used to call me Freddy.

FRANCES

I can't very well call you Freddy, can I?

THE OGRE

No; but you can think of me as Freddy. You will, sometimes; won't you?

FRANCES

Yes. I promise.

THE OGRE (*walking about emotionally*)

How that brings back thoughts of the old days! Things were different then! Oh, yes! Things were different. (*Suddenly he stops near her*) Would you mind? (*He doubles her arm*) It's all right now that we've been introduced. That's right. (*He feels her biceps with signs of joy*) I believe, oh, I do believe that you will agree with me! (*He hastens to the kitchen table and opens a huge diary. He leafs through it, mumbling the names of the days*) Monday — Wednesday — Friday — A week from Monday; that's it! (*He turns politely to the girl*) How would

you like to make a date with me for a week from Monday?

FRANCES

A date? What for?

THE OGRE

A date for supper.

FRANCES

Don't I get anything to eat until then?

THE OGRE (*laughing heartily*)

How absurd! How perfectly preposterous! How utterly ridiculous! You get something to eat every half hour! Every fifteen minutes, if you want it! Why, you spend the whole day eating! You tell the Cook your favorite dishes, and she does nothing except cook them for you — except when she's cooking for me. And then, a week from Monday, we meet at the supper table. Is it a go?

FRANCES

A go?

THE OGRE (*correcting himself*)

Pardon my slang. I mean, do you accept my invitation?

FRANCES (*after thinking*)

Yes; thank you.

THE OGRE

That's fine! Of course, it doesn't really matter whether you accept or not, because you'll be there, anyway. But it's always nicer to do things politely, isn't it?

FRANCES (*without answering*)

After Monday; what then?

THE JESTER

You see! She's getting suspicious!

THE OGRE (*lightly*)

After Monday? The world will go on in the same old way. And you, let us hope (*he sighs blissfully*), will be a sweet memory.

[*He strikes a gong.*]

THE COOK (*entering*)

Yis, sorr?

THE OGRE

Cook, this is Frances. (*They bow to each other*)  
Frances and I have made an appointment for a week from Monday.

THE COOK

Yis, sorr. I'll raymember it.

THE OGRE (*taking the Cook aside*)

How will we have her? Stuffed and roasted?

THE COOK (*shaking her head*)

If I'm not afther makin' a mistake, she'll do for broiling.

THE OGRE (*delighted*)

You really think so? Well, then, broiling it is. (*He hobbles to the door much more cheerfully*) I'm beginning to feel better already. Good morning.

[*He goes.*]

FRANCES (*going to the Cook*)

What does he mean by roasting and broiling?

THE COOK

Don't ye know?

FRANCES

No.



## THE COOK

Ye'll learn soon enough. (*She goes, locking the entrance door behind her. Frances tries the door; it will not open*)

## THE JESTER

Now she's getting very suspicious.

[*Frances comes back to the center of the room, plainly worried. She goes to the great barred door, pushes aside the bars and opens it. The dinners rush in.*

FRANCES (*surprised*)

Hello!

## THE DINNERS

Hello!

## FRANCES

Who are you?

## THE DINNERS

We are the dinners. I am the Monday dinner. I am the Tuesday dinner. I am the Wednesday dinner — the Thursday dinner —

[*a chorus*

## FRANCES

The Monday dinner? The Tuesday dinner? Whatever do you mean?

## THE MONDAY DINNER

He's going to eat me to-night.

FRANCES (*horrificed*)

Eat you?

THE TUESDAY DINNER (*nodding*)

And he's going to eat me to-morrow.

## FRANCES

Oh!

THE WEDNESDAY DINNER (*you remember she has a cold*)

Yes; ad he's goig to eat me Weddesday, udless she (*pointing to the Tuesday dinner*) upsets his stubbig!

FRANCES (*desperately*)

I don't believe it! I don't believe it!

THE MONDAY DINNER

Do you know where you are? This is the Ogre's Castle!

FRANCES

What of it?

THE MONDAY DINNER

You know what an Ogre is, don't you?

FRANCES

But — but he's such a nice old man. He said he was going to dine with me a week from Monday.

THE TUESDAY DINNER

Not *with* you; *on* you!

THE JESTER

What a difference one little word makes!

FRANCES (*terror-stricken*)

Dine *on* me? You mean he's going to eat me?

THE MONDAY DINNER

Of course! He's an Ogre.

THE TUESDAY DINNER

First he'll keep you here a week, and fatten you.

THE THURSDAY DINNER

That's what he's doing with all of us.

THE FRIDAY DINNER

He'll feel your muscle every day.

FRANCES

He's done that already!

## THE WEDNESDAY DINNER

He'll feed you till you're nice (*she has a struggle pronouncing the word*) ad fat ad juicy, ad thed —

FRANCES

And then?

## THE MONDAY DINNER

Your turn will come a week from Monday.

FRANCES (*desperately*)

But I don't want to be eaten!

## THE MONDAY DINNER

None of us want to be eaten. But what can we do about it?

FRANCES

I know what *I* can do about it! Go to the door! Listen! Tell me if you hear any one coming! (*The dinners rush to the door; Frances to the telephone*) Hello! Hello! . . . Central, please be quick! . . . Hello, Central, give me Information! (*She turns to the dinners*) Do you hear anything?

## THE MONDAY DINNER

All right so far!

FRANCES

Hello, Information! Information? . . . Give me the telephone number of my Fairy Godmother. . . . No, I don't know where she lives, and I don't know her name. But you know, don't you? . . . Of course you know! That's what you're there for! . . . Yes; I'll hold the wire; but hurry! Hurry!

## THE MONDAY DINNER

The Ogre's coming!

FRANCES

Lock the door!

## THE MONDAY DINNER

It's locked already! But he's unlocking it!

## FRANCES

Then don't let him in!

*[A key turns gratefully in the lock, but the dinners hold fast to the knob.]*

## THE MONDAY DINNER

He's trying to open the door!

## FRANCES

Hold tight! Hold tight! *(She turns to the telephone excitedly)* Oh, how do you do, Fairy Godmother? This is Frances. I'm in trouble; terrible trouble. . . . What? . . . I don't have to tell you about it? You know all about it already? Oh, you *are* a Fairy Godmother! Now what am I to do? . . . Yes? . . . Yes? . . . I turn my ring twice? And then back once? Oh, thank you! Thank you ever so much! *[She hangs up.]*

## THE WEDNESDAY DINNER

He's gone to get the Cook!

## FRANCES

Quick! Hide!

*[The dinners rush madly out of sight. The door bursts open; the Ogre and the Cook rush in.]*

THE OGRE *(very angry)*

Who tried to keep me out? *(He peers about and catches sight of Frances)* Did you do it? You couldn't have done it all by yourself; you couldn't.

## FRANCES

Well, if I couldn't, I didn't. So there!

## THE OGRE

Be more respectful to your elders! *(He hobbles*

*about the room*) There's only one of them here.  
Where are the others?

FRANCES

What others?

THE OGRE

You know well enough! (*He turns to the Cook*)  
See if they're all there! If there's one missing —  
(*and he gasps at the thought*) — if there's one missing,  
I'll eat you (*he points a finger at the trembling Cook*)  
even if you're the death of me!

THE JESTER (*nodding*)

And she would be!

THE COOK (*opening the barred door and counting, terror-stricken*)

Wan — three — foive — sivin. None missing, sorr.

THE OGRE

But there might have been! There might have  
been! (*He hobbles about the room, glaring at Frances*)  
Hum! So this is how you repay me for my hospi-  
tality! This is how you reward me for my kind-  
ness! This is the thanks you give me for the food  
and shelter which I was ready to provide!

FRANCES

How about the food which I was to provide?

THE OGRE

That's another matter! Quite another matter! (*He  
turns to the Cook*) Light the fire! See that it's  
good and hot! Get the spit ready! I'm going to  
do something that I've never done before in my life;  
I'm going to roast her myself!  
[*He turns savagely on Frances.*]

THE COOK (*very much alarmed*)

Oh, don't do that, sorr!

THE OGRE

And why not?

THE COOK

Ye could never eat her! Roasting's an art! Ye've got to learn how!

THE OGRE

I'm going to start learning this minute.

THE COOK (*desperately*)

Lave it to me, sorr. Let me do it! (*She beckons anxiously to Frances*) Come along, little girl! Come along!

THE OGRE (*furiously*)

Did you hear what I said? Well, I meant it!

THE COOK

But —

THE OGRE (*interrupting at the top of his lungs*)

Do as I say!

THE COOK (*whimpering*)

Yis, sorr.

[*She turns slowly to the door, very much frightened.*]

FRANCES

No! Stop! (*The Cook stops. Frances turns to the Ogre*) You're not going to eat me!

THE OGRE

No?

FRANCES

No!

THE OGRE

Well, just watch me!

FRANCES

You're nothing but a bogey man in a fairy tale!  
And fairy tales always come out happily. I've  
known that ever since I was five.

THE OGRE (*seizing a huge knife from the table and advancing upon her*)

And how are you going to make this one turn out  
happily?

FRANCES

Just so!

[*She raises her hands and turns the ring. Instantly the lights go out and thunder rumbles and crashes.*]

THE OGRE (*in the dark*)

Where is she? Where is she? Let me catch her!  
Just let me get my hands on her!

A VOICE

Here I am!

[*The room lights up. But the voice has not come from Frances; it has come from a strapping Boy Scout who stands, quite fearless, on the spot where she stood.*]

THE COOK (*gasping with surprise*)

Saints in Hiven, how she's changed!

THE JESTER (*indicating the Ogre with glee*)

He's too blind to know the difference!

THE OGRE

Now I've got you!

[*He advances with his knife. As he raises it to strike, the Scout knocks it out of his hand.*]

THE OGRE (*collapsing with astonishment*)

She knocked it out of my hand!

THE COOK (*bursting with laughter*)

Indade *she* did!

THE OGRE (*incredulously*)

A little girl knocked that knife out of my hand!  
(*He goes to the Scout, still unaware of what has taken place*) If you don't mind, may I feel your muscle?

THE SCOUT (*smiling and doubling his arm*)

Certainly!

THE OGRE (*feels*)

Oh! O—h! O—h—h!

[*He sinks helpless into a chair.*]

THE SCOUT (*pointing to the barred door*)

Open that door!

THE COOK (*gesticulating at the Ogre*)

Not unless he says so.

THE SCOUT

Open that door!

[*There is a terrific hammering on the barred door.*]

THE COOK

I don't dast!

THE SCOUT

You don't have to!

[*And on the word the door flies open and a troop of Boy Scouts bursts into the room.*]

THE COOK

Saints preserve us!

THE OGRE (*peering at them fearfully*)

Who are you?

THE SCOUTS

I'm the Monday dinner! I'm the Tuesday dinner!  
— the Wednesday dinner! — the Thursday dinner!  
[*A chorus.*]



THE OGRE (*rises very slowly, very feebly, and staggers towards them*) If you don't mind? (*He feels the muscle of two or three. Then, very faintly*) I knew this was going to happen some day!

[*He faints.*]

THE FIRST BOY SCOUT

And now, what are we going to do with him?

THE SCOUTS

Kill him!

No, killing's too good for him!

Yes, kill him!

THE COOK (*hastening to them*)

Go aisy, lads! Go aisy! Ye don't think the ould baste (*and she points to the unconscious form of the Ogre*) ever really et anybody?

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT

He never ate anybody? I don't believe it!

THE COOK (*smiling*)

I wouldn't be afther sayin' it if he could hear me, but just bechune you an' me, lads, he never et anything but what you and I would eat! (*They look at her in astonishment. She continues confidentially*) 'Twas himself that did the buyin', but 'twas I that did the cookin', an' what he got on his table — (*She interrupts*) D'ye know what it was?

THE SCOUTS

No. What was it?

THE COOK (*with great secrecy*)

Irish stew!

THE JESTER

That's why his stomach was always out of order!

THE COOK

Irish stew and Irish stew! Day in an' day out for twinty years! An' every single wan av 'em different! Once — once in a long while 'twas roast lamb; but in the main 'twas Irish stew, and then, more Irish stew!

ONE OF THE SCOUTS

But he thinks he's been eating —

THE COOK (*interrupting*)

I can't help what he thinks. He can think what he plases. If he chooses to think he's been eatin' them little dears (*and she points to the barred door and to the room which it discloses*) 'tis his privilege! But before I'd let wan av 'em come to harm, 'tis meself would take th' ould baste an' cook him in his own kitchen!

ONE OF THE SCOUTS (*after a pause*)

We've all read of ogres.

ANOTHER

Yes.

ANOTHER

Man-eating ogres!

THE COOK

Sure! Well, I ask ye this; did ye ever read of a man-eating ogre ever eatin' anybody? Think careful before ye speak! Did ye ever read of any foine young hero gettin' fricasseed? Ye did not! (*Triumphantly*) An' for why? 'Twas because ivry last wan av th' ogres had an Irish cook, an' because when they served him up an Irish stew, how should himself know if 'twas lamb — or beef — or perhaps the

loikes of you? (*The Ogre moves feebly*) Don't let on ye know, lads! It's a trade secret!

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT

There's one thing you've got to explain.

THE COOK

An' that is?

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT (*pointing to the great barred door*)

That is his larder, isn't it? It was full of little girls. Now, what's happened to them?

THE COOK (*scratching her head*)

That's a foine question for th' loikes of you to be askin' me!

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT

Why?

THE COOK (*perplexed*)

Afther th' magic's gone an' changed thim all into you! (*And she points around the circle. The Scouts are puzzled. She points to the ring on the leader's finger*) She had a ring loike that, an' she turned it somehow —

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT

Turned it?

[*He raises his hand curiously and examines the ring.*

THE COOK (*eagerly*)

Thry turning it!

[*The Principal Boy Scout turns the ring. Again there is darkness and rolling thunder. But when the light appears again, the Boy Scouts have not vanished. Instead, next to each one stands one of the missing dinners.*

THE COOK (*triumphantly*)

Th' magic worked different this time, but there ye are!

THE OGRE (*rises feebly, and staggers to a chair. He looks around grimly and fastens his gaze upon the Cook*)

I heard what you said! I wasn't unconscious!

THE COOK (*terrified*)

For th' love of Mike!

THE OGRE

When I thought I was eating little girls you were really serving me Irish stew? Nothing but Irish stew?

THE COOK (*trembling*)

Y-yis, sorr.

THE OGRE (*turning to Frances and the dinners*)

I take back all the hard things I ever thought of you! (*He rises slowly*) Open the doors! Let them go home!

THE DINNERS

Home!

He's going to let us go home!

We're not going to be eaten!

We're going home!

FRANCES (*who, perhaps, is a little sorry for the Ogre, coming to him gently*)

But what are you going to eat now?

THE OGRE (*smiling*)

Do you really want to know?

FRANCES

Yes.

THE OGRE

I'm going to turn vegetarian!

THE CURTAINS BEGIN TO CLOSE

THE JESTER (*rising*)

Stop! Those curtains must not close!

FRANCES

Why not?

THE JESTER

This is a fairy play. Where's the moral?

THE OGRE

That's so!

THE COOK (*scratching her head*)

Well, what *is* the moral?

THE OGRE

Maybe — maybe — I ate the moral.

[*There is a pause while everybody thinks hard.*]

THE JESTER

Well, I'm waiting.

THE COOK (*with innermost conviction*)

The moral's got something to do with Irish stew!

THE OGRE (*shuddering*)

Let's hope not!

[*He swallows a pill hastily.*]

FRANCES (*after another pause*)

This is the moral; when you're in trouble, ask for Information and telephone your Fairy Godmother.

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT

But what are you going to do if there's no telephone?

FRANCES

I don't know. Let's ask the Ogre.

THE PRINCIPAL BOY SCOUT

Yes; let's ask the Ogre.

THE COOK (*breaks into laughter, rocks back and forth doubled up with mirth. Finally, gasping for breath, wiping the tears from her eyes*)

G'wan! Ye don't really believe in Ogres?

THE JESTER (*with a sweeping gesture*)

*That is the moral!*

[*He bows.*

CURTAIN









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